

§6.201

(2) Consider the relevant NEPA documents, public and other agency comments (if any) on those documents, and EPA responses to those comments, as part of consideration of the action (see 40 CFR 1505.1(d)).

(3) Consider the alternatives analyzed in an EA or EIS before rendering a decision on the action; and

(4) Ensure that the decision on the action is to implement an alternative analyzed or is within the range of alternatives analyzed in the EA or EIS (see 40 CFR 1505.1(e)).

(f) To eliminate duplication and to foster efficiency, the Responsible Official should use tiering (see 40 CFR 1502.20 and 1508.28) and incorporate material by reference (see 40 CFR 1502.21) as appropriate.

(g) For applicant-related proposed actions:

(1) The Responsible Official may request that the applicant submit information to support the application of a categorical exclusion to the applicant's pending action.

(2) The Responsible Official may gather the information and prepare the NEPA document without assistance from the applicant, or, pursuant to Subpart C of this part, have the applicant prepare an EID or a draft EA and supporting documents, or enter into a third-party agreement with the applicant.

(3) During the environmental review process, applicants may continue to compile additional information needed for the environmental review and/or information necessary to support an application for a permit or assistance agreement from EPA.

(h) For all NEPA determinations (CEs, EA/FONSIs, or EIS/RODs) that are five years old or older, and for which the subject action has not yet been implemented, the Responsible Official must re-evaluate the proposed action, environmental conditions, and public views to determine whether to conduct a supplemental environmental review of the action and complete an appropriate NEPA document or reaffirm EPA's original NEPA determination. If there has been substantial change in the proposed action that is relevant to environmental concerns, or if there are significant new cir-

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cumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed action or its impacts, the Responsible Official must conduct a supplemental environmental review of the action and complete an appropriate NEPA document.

§6.201 Coordination with other environmental review requirements.

Consistent with 40 CFR 1500.5(g) and 1502.25, the Responsible Official must determine the applicability of other environmental laws and executive orders, to the fullest extent possible. The Responsible Official should incorporate applicable requirements as early in the NEPA review process as possible.

§6.202 Interagency cooperation.

(a) Consistent with 40 CFR 1501.5, 1501.6, and 1508.5, the Responsible Official will request other appropriate federal and non-federal agencies to be joint lead or cooperating agencies as a means of encouraging early coordination and cooperation with federal agencies, state and local governments, and federally-recognized Indian tribes with jurisdiction by law or special expertise.

(b) For an EPA action related to an action of any other federal agency, the Responsible Official must comply with the requirements of 40 CFR 1501.5 and 1501.6 relating to lead agencies and cooperating agencies, respectively. The Responsible Official will work with the other involved agencies to facilitate coordination and to reduce delay and duplication.

(c) To prepare a single document to fulfill both NEPA and state or local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe requirements, consistent with 40 CFR 1506.2, the Responsible Official should enter into a written agreement with the involved state or local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe that sets out the intentions of the parties, including the responsibilities each party intends to assume and procedures the parties intend to follow.

§6.203 Public participation.

(a) *General requirements.* (1) The procedures in this section apply to EPA's environmental review processes, including development, supplementation,

adoption, and revision of NEPA documents.

(2) The Responsible Official will make diligent efforts to involve the public, including applicants, in the preparation of EAs or EISs consistent with 40 CFR 1501.4 and 1506.6 and applicable EPA public participation regulations (e.g., 40 CFR Part 25).

(3) EPA NEPA documents will use plain language to the extent possible.

(4) The Responsible Official will, to the greatest extent possible, give notice to any state or local government, or federally-recognized Indian tribe that, in the Official's judgment, may be affected by an action for which EPA plans to prepare an EA or an EIS.

(5) The Responsible Official must use appropriate communication procedures to ensure meaningful public participation throughout the NEPA process. The Responsible Official must make reasonable efforts to involve the potentially affected communities where the proposed action is expected to have environmental impacts or where the proposed action may have human health or environmental effects in any communities, including minority communities, low-income communities, or federally-recognized Indian tribal communities.

(b) *EA and FONSI requirements.* (1) At least thirty (30) calendar days before making the decision on whether, and if so how, to proceed with a proposed action, the Responsible Official must make the EA and preliminary FONSI available for review and comment to the interested federal agencies, state and local governments, federally-recognized Indian tribes and the affected public. The Responsible Official must respond to any substantive comments received and finalize the EA and FONSI before making a decision on the proposed action.

(2) Where circumstances make it necessary to take the action without observing the 30 calendar day comment period, the Responsible Official must notify the NEPA Official before taking such action. If the NEPA Official determines that a reduced comment period would be in the best interest of the Government, the NEPA Official will inform the Responsible Official, as soon as possible, of this approval. The Re-

sponsible Official will make the EA and preliminary FONSI available for review and comment for the reduced comment period.

(c) *EIS and ROD requirements.* (1) As soon as practicable after the decision to prepare an EIS and before beginning the scoping process, the Responsible Official must ensure that a notice of intent (NOI) (see 40 CFR 1508.22) is published in the FEDERAL REGISTER. The NOI must briefly describe the proposed action; a preliminary list of environmental issues to be analyzed, and possible alternatives; EPA's proposed scoping process including, if available, whether, when, and where any scoping meeting will be held; and the name and contact information for the person designated by EPA to answer questions about the proposed action and the EIS. The NOI must invite comments and suggestions on the scope of the EIS.

(2) The Responsible Official must disseminate the NOI consistent with 40 CFR 1506.6.

(3) The Responsible Official must conduct the scoping process consistent with 40 CFR 1501.7 and any applicable EPA public participation regulations (e.g., 40 CFR Part 25).

(i) Publication of the NOI in the FEDERAL REGISTER begins the scoping process.

(ii) The Responsible Official must ensure that the scoping process for an EIS allows a minimum of thirty (30) days for the receipt of public comments.

(iii) The Responsible Official may hold one or more public meetings as part of the scoping process for an EPA EIS. The Responsible Official must announce the location, date, and time of public scoping meetings in the NOI or by other appropriate means, such as additional notices in the FEDERAL REGISTER, news releases to the local media, or letters to affected parties. Public scoping meetings should be held at least fifteen (15) days after public notification.

(iv) The Responsible Official must use appropriate means to publicize the availability of draft and final EISs and the time and place for public meetings or hearings on draft EISs. The methods chosen for public participation must focus on reaching persons who may be

interested in the proposed action. Such persons include those in potentially affected communities where the proposed action is known or expected to have environmental impacts including minority communities, low-income communities, or federally-recognized Indian tribal communities.

(v) The Responsible Official must circulate the draft and final EISs consistent with 40 CFR 1502.19 and any applicable EPA public participation regulations and in accordance with the 45-day public review period for draft EISs and the 30-day public review period for final EISs (see § 6.209 of this part). Consistent with section 6.209(b) of this part, the Responsible Official may establish a longer public comment period for a draft or final EIS.

(vi) After preparing a draft EIS and before preparing a final EIS, the Responsible Official must solicit the comments of appropriate federal agencies, state and/or local governments, and/or federally-recognized Indian tribes, and the public (see 40 CFR 1503.1). The Responsible Official must respond in the final EIS to substantive comments received (see 40 CFR 1503.4).

(vii) The Responsible Official may conduct one or more public meetings or hearings on the draft EIS as part of the public involvement process. If meetings or hearings are held, the Responsible Official must make the draft EIS available to the public at least thirty (30) days in advance of any meeting or hearing.

(4) The Responsible Official must make the ROD available to the public upon request.

§ 6.204 Categorical exclusions and extraordinary circumstances.

(a) A proposed action may be categorically excluded if the action fits within a category of action that is eligible for exclusion and the proposed action does not involve any extraordinary circumstances.

(1) Certain actions eligible for categorical exclusion require the Responsible Official to document a determination that a categorical exclusion applies. The documentation must include: A brief description of the proposed action; a statement identifying the categorical exclusion that applies to the

action; and a statement explaining why no extraordinary circumstances apply to the proposed action. The Responsible Official must make a copy of the determination document available to the public upon request. The categorical exclusions requiring this documentation are listed in paragraphs (a)(1)(i) through (a)(1)(v) of this section.

(i) Actions at EPA owned or operated facilities involving routine facility maintenance, repair, and grounds-keeping; minor rehabilitation, restoration, renovation, or revitalization of existing facilities; functional replacement of equipment; acquisition and installation of equipment; or construction of new minor ancillary facilities adjacent to or on the same property as existing facilities.

(ii) Actions relating to existing infrastructure systems (such as sewer systems; drinking water supply systems; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) that involve minor upgrading, or minor expansion of system capacity or rehabilitation (including functional replacement) of the existing system and system components (such as the sewer collection network and treatment system; the system to collect, treat, store and distribute drinking water; and stormwater systems, including combined sewer overflow systems) or construction of new minor ancillary facilities adjacent to or on the same property as existing facilities. This category does not include actions that: involve new or relocated discharges to surface or ground water; will likely result in the substantial increase in the volume or the loading of pollutant to the receiving water; will provide capacity to serve a population 30% greater than the existing population; are not supported by the state, or other regional growth plan or strategy; or directly or indirectly involve or relate to upgrading or extending infrastructure systems primarily for the purposes of future development.

(iii) Actions in unsewered communities involving the replacement of existing onsite systems, providing the new onsite systems do not result in substantial increases in the volume of discharge or the loadings of pollutants